

2 Kyarra Road
GLEEN IRIS SE 6 Vic
January 3 1963

Dear *R & R,*

Many thanks, Rube, firstly for the telegram and now for your letter conveying your congratulations. It was nice of you to rush into print so quickly. It is all rather "thrilling" although I should be old enough to take it in my stride. So far I have had 10 telegrams, a dozen 'phone calls, and several visitors. There have also been, so far, 6 letters. It is a pity my "Secretary" was not here to receive the correspondence.

It was not the shock to me that you might expect - at least the shock did not come with the morning paper on Jan. 1st. About 6 weeks ago I had a letter from the Personal Secretary to the Governor-General advising that H.M. the Queen would be pleased to appoint me a Member of the Order of the British Empire, and asked if I were prepared to accept the appointment. You can guess my reply. However, I was bound to strict secrecy until the announcement appeared in the newspapers but I can assure you I was hanging around waiting for the paper on Tuesday morning. I had only just read it when the first 'phone call came in; some friends had heard it on 3 AR before I had received the ~~xx~~ paper. It would appear in all capital city ~~xx~~ papers so they would see it in the Brisbane Courier-Mail sometime that morning.

I don't really know what Dad would have had to say in this case, but I know that Mum thought that something of this kind would have been in order. It would have been nice if she could have known.

The next knee-shaking event will be to appear before the Queen on February 25th to receive the honor. I suppose that will be at Government House Melbourne but I have no details about this yet.

All well in Brisbane when I heard yesterday. They had a good trip to Brisbane but have been mostly house-bound since they arrived due to lots of rain. I am managing to get a few odd jobs cleaned up which means that there is not too much spare time particularly in the recent circumstances. I'll be flat out for an evening or two answering my "fan" mail.

Thanks again for the congratulations and for the Christmas present, the New Year greetings and the birthday message. All the best to you both for 1963. Cheerio for now - see you one of these days.

*Love from
Fred.*

2 Kyarra Road
GLEN IRIS SE 6 Vic
February 27 1963

Dear

Ruby Russell,

No doubt you will be wondering whether we survived last Monday. Well, we did so I had now better give you an outline of what happened. First of course the women, Nance and Annette, had difficulty in getting the stockings and the bag, and the hat and the dress and all the other things to suit and to fit. Even as late as last Saturday morning Annette rushed back into town to change stockings because they did not properly match something else in the daylight. I'm not really sure whose 'party' it was - theirs or mine. Ian had an almost new suit and so did I and anyway I wasn't very worried if my Sox and my tie did not properly match!! The choice was between morning suit or lounge suit and as there had been so much said about the 'informal' Royal Tour I stuck to my lounge suit and as it transpired this was wise; only about 4 out of 60 wore morning suits.

Sunday I gave the car a special spit and polish. That afternoon the King Street folk came over and stayed to tea. I also did a run over the route that I was to follow to Government House so there would be no hitches there.

Monday morning I fixed my Government House Pass on the windscreen of the car and distributed the personal passes to Nance, Annette and Ian and made sure my own piece of paper was in my pocket. We left home at 2 45pm with instructions to arrive at Government House at 3 30pm. I pulled up in Alexander Avenue for 10 minutes to lose time not knowing that just around the next corner there would be 'millions' of cars, barricades, policemen and milling people. I lost most of the next 10 minutes working my way through the mob but arrived at the Government House gate almost dead on 3 30pm and was soon parked in the grounds. We sauntered over to G.H. and at about 3 50pm the Ballroom doors were opened and the "sticky beaks" with their passes ushered inside and seated. The 'victims' were drafted down a long flower-decked passage and around corners into the billiard room where they were seated in their proper order as they would later be presented to Her Majesty. Almost dead on 4 40pm - the appointed time - the Knights were taken in line and (although we could not see what went on) received their accolades. In due course the 'bunch' of which I was one moved out and lined up for entrance to the Ball Room. This is what happened: The name was called - "Frederick William Stevens Member of the Most Honorable Order of the British Empire, ~~xxx~~ 'In recognition of his services to Civil Aviation'. This was my cue to move into the Ball Room, walk about 10 paces until in front of Her Majesty, stop, turn left, bow, take three paces forward and stand beside the dais on which H.M. was standing. H.M. pinned on my lapel the insignia of the M.B.E., said a few words and asked a question; I replied; she shook hands; I took two paces back, bowed, turned right and was met after about 10 paces by a Lt /Cdr in uniform who took me to my seat, gave me a printed list of all those who had been given honors also

2 ~~the citation~~

the citation printed and in an envelope and a little black box with "M.B.E." in gold lettering on the lid, and offered congratulations.

My part was over. After everybody had been put through the mill there was the National Anthem, H.M. moved off behind curtains and we slowly moved out into the grounds. People soon began to disperse as it was, by now, getting on for 6pm so we too moved off after taking a look at the G.H. gardens. We went to town, had a meal there (nobody was keen about going home to the kitchen) then after a look at the lights in town we too went home.

What H.M. says to an individual is not repeated therefore I cannot tell you what was said or asked. She, as you will have seen from the newspaper, wore a simple summer frock which I thought was off-white but apparently was pale sea green. She had a small hat but the only jewellery that I noticed was a necklet of pearls. She is quite small. Standing as she was on the dais with me on the floor, I could almost look down upon her. Her handshake was not, as one might expect, soft and flabby; it was not strong but firm. She certainly was not "painted and powdered" and seemed ~~to~~ just as fresh as when she started out that morning on her round of duties. I don't think I did too badly, in the few moments available to me, to take in what I did, do you?? There were probably other items of interest to you but that is ~~all~~ all I can recall..... It is a far cry from that day in 1901 when I saw the then Duke and Duchess of York in the Royal Yacht "Ophir" enter Port Phillip Heads to this day of February 25 1963 when I stood before, spoke to, shook hands with and received an M.B.E. from H.M. Queen Elizabeth. I feel pretty sure I was not 'nervous' or shewed any signs of nerves but after it was all over I, quite frankly, was ready for a cup of tea. Slowly the next day my tight spring ran down and now I'm almost back to normal. I shall, however, remember the occasion for a long time.

When Annette and Hazel were down here some years ago I took them to Aireys where Annette remembered collecting 'specimens' of limpets, star-fish, etc. Since she has now to take a much keener interest in those sort of things at the University I took her there again last Sunday week. For a change of route I went along past Geelong to Winchelsea and down the old bullock-wagon road that is now mostly bitumised. Annette collected jars of "beautiful" specimens. I arranged the trip to get there at low water at 11am which we did. After the specimen collecting which went on until about 2pm, I barbequed hamburgers and chops down by the river mouth which incidentally was silted up. After a spell we went on and had a short look at Anglesea and Torquay and arrived home again about 6pm. There was not time to go over to the Grove that day. What has Annette done with the specimens you might ask. Well there are bottles and jars of starfish, whelks, small mutton fish and other odds and ends now very dead in formalin and which she will take back to Brisbane and hope to get 'points' at the University for her collection.

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She leaves here by train this Thursday evening, will have Friday in Sydney, leave there Friday evening and arrive in Brisbane about 1pm Saturday - almost the same old trip that you did excepting that there is no change at Albury now.

Not a lot in my garden. There are the usual tomatoes coming along very nicely also some Queensland blue pumpkins, parsnips and ~~the~~ the usual rhubarb but that is about all. I got a ~~sugar~~ sugar-bag of spuds so I suppose I can't really growl particularly when I don't get a lot of time for gardening.. I catch the same train mornings and evenings as I did when I was at D.C.A. and now, too I work about each one in about four Saturday mornings 9am to noon. There is never a dull moment at the the R.A.C.V. - we always seem to be busy. On the day after that last lot of heavy rain we had 214 'phone enquiries and only two of us handled them. I'm now almost fulltime on 'phone enquiries and average about 50 calls per day. We get all sorts of strange enquiries. One call this afternoon was to ask where the place "Wallington" is; that was an easy one of course. Many of the calls are for maps to be sent out but there are other types of enquiries too, such as: What is the distance from the Melbourne G.P.O. to Portsea; What times does the Sorrento-Queenscliff ferry run; Is there a vehicular ferry now between Stony Point and Phillip Island (the answer is 'No'); What would be a good time of the year to do a trip by car to Darwin; and so it goes on, no two days alike.

Must stop now. Wish we could get a bit of winter for a change; this continuous summer is not good for man or beast.

All well here and hope the same at your end. See you one of these days but somehow I jib at too many runs over that rather boring Geelong road. Oh, by the way, I had hoped to go through to Colac when we went to Aireys but did not get away in time. I understand there is now a big Motel on Camerons Hill and I wondered if it was where Otway Villa stood. Must get down and have a look one of these days.

Bye now. Best wishes and good luck.

Love from us all
from
Fred.